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16

11 March 1971

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: China Group Review of Chinese Activities Relevant to
the Current Situation in Indochina, 10 March 1971

1. In discussing Chou En-lai's recent visit to Hanoi, the group agreed that the public statements issued did not raise the level of verbal threat over that of two weeks ago. Indeed, the language of the joint communique remains several notches below the level of menace reached in Chinese propaganda during 1965-66. The Chinese continue to maintain a high degree of ambiguity in their deterrent statements, suggesting that they do not want to be committed to any direct military involvement. The toughest part of the recent communique promised only that, if the US expands the war, the Chinese would "not flinch even from the greatest national sacrifices" in giving "all-out" support and assistance to the Vietnamese. This is consistent with previous indicators of Chinese intent, and suggests that the most likely purpose of the visit was to serve as a deterrent on the Allies and, in addition, to reassure Hanoi. At the same time, Peking also seems concerned to score points in the

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Sino-Soviet arena by stressing the bilateral nature of its aid, in contrast to the "joint" effort called for by the Russians.

2. It was also noted that the emphasis given to logistics and armaments specialists in the Chinese party serves notice that Peking is ready to replace supplies lost in the present struggle in Laos and also raises the possibility that there may have been some consideration of the Chinese taking a more active role in moving supplies through North Vietnam.

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4. While there is as yet little reporting on behind-the-scenes developments during Chou's visit, all analysts will of course remain alert to further informational fall-out from the trip, particularly in regard to Chinese intent to increase their support to Hanoi.

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